Care of your senior pet

At the age of seven, our pets are generally considered to be pensioners and just like us at this age they will become more prone to age related illnesses such as arthritis, cancers, dementia, diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease and thyroid problems.

In this simple guide we aim to advise you on ways to help your pet have the best quality of life throughout their senior years and how to identify common signs of age related illnesses to aid quick diagnosis and treatment.

Regular general health checks

Once your pet is in its golden years we recommend bringing them along to the vets every six months for a general health check. This is because six months is roughly the equivalent to twenty four months in cat or dog years and a great deal can change physically and mentally in this time – if your pet is a Pet Health Club member they will already benefit from two health checks a year, included in the preventative care plan.

We may also recommend a blood and urine test annually, this will help us with early detection of diseases, often before clinical signs are noticeable.

Your vet will help you understand if any problems detected during your pet's general health check are serious or could have any long-term implications, and discuss appropriate treatment plan options.

We are always here to support and advise pet owners, so please feel free to ask us about anything pet related that you have questions or concerns about.

Preventative healthcare

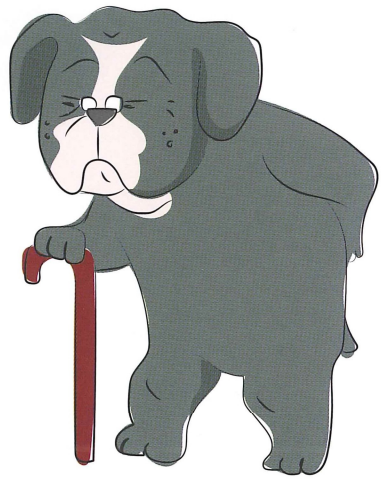
It is important to continue with annual vaccinations and effective parasite treatments that treat the entire flea lifecycle, as well as a variety of worms, mites and ticks. Diseases and parasites are not selective in their hosts, however the effects of the symptoms and diseases they transmit are usually more severe for elderly animals to cope with and recover from.

If your pet is used to having their teeth brushed, you should continue to do this daily wherever possible. If your pet is not used to having their teeth brushed, it's never too late to start, please see our dental care leaflet for tips on how to introduce this to your pet.

Exercise and nutrition

Excess weight puts unnecessary strain on joints and organs, yet keeping your pet active and in good shape is often more challenging as they get older.

Feed your pet a diet that is age and lifestyle appropriate. Senior foods will be lower in calories and be nutritionally balanced for the needs of older pets to include nutrients such as glucosamine and omega-3 fatty acids. If your pet is diagnosed with an ongoing condition a specialist diet may be recommended as part of a treatment plan, i.e. for pets with diabetes, renal or mobility issues.



Arthritis effects around 60% of senior pets and is a degenerative disease, so whilst it will never get better, you can slow its progress whilst keeping your pet active by avoiding high impact play, swapping one long walk for two or three shorter walks and avoiding stairs/steps where possible.

Creature Comforts

Review you pet's bed and answer the following questions:

- Do they have to climb over high sides to get in it?
- Is it washable?
- Does it look comfortable/is the padding still fluffy?
- Is it warm and protected from drafts?

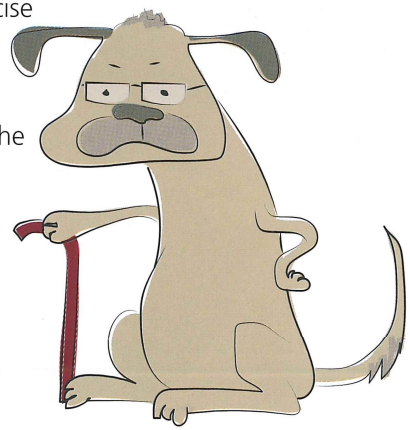
Some pets also struggle to keep their usual appearance up to scratch due to a lack or reduced amount of grooming. Assisting pets with grooming can be a rewarding activity for both pets and owners and is an ideal replacement for food based praise.

Consider access to litter trays, it may be beneficial to replace with low-sided trays and provide on all levels of your home.

Signs to look out for

If you notice any of the below signs please contact your vet, as these are common signs of age related illnesses. Your pet will greatly benefit from early diagnoses and a treatment plan to manage symptoms, and we appreciate that you know your pet best so please don't hesitate to discuss the smallest of changes.

- Change in appetite
- Increased or decreased thirst
- Uncharacteristic, antisocial behaviour
- Difficulty getting up from resting
- Difficulty climbing stairs, jumping onto surfaces or getting in/out of the car
- Reluctance to exercise or lagging behind on walks
- Squatting around the home
- Appearance of lumps and bumps
- Bad breath
- Weight gain or loss



- Increased vocalisation or separation anxiety
- Disorientation, staring at walls, looking distant
- Lack of spatial awareness
- Change in toileting habits
- Increased sleeping

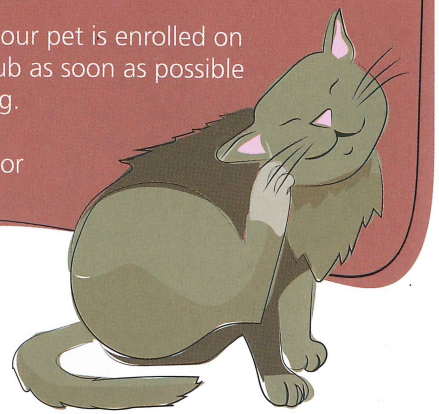
The Pet Health Club

Pet Health Club

The Pet Health Club is our 'gold standard' preventative healthcare plan covering vaccinations, health checks, microchips, flea and worming treatments, cost price food and discounts on a range of products and procedures such as neutering. It's all covered in one affordable monthly direct debit.

We recommend your pet is enrolled on the Pet Health Club as soon as possible to start benefitting.

Ask at reception for details.



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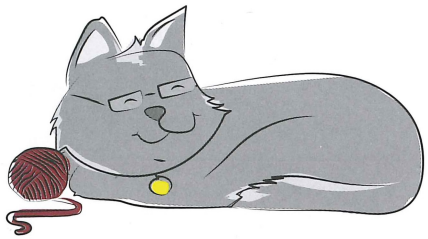
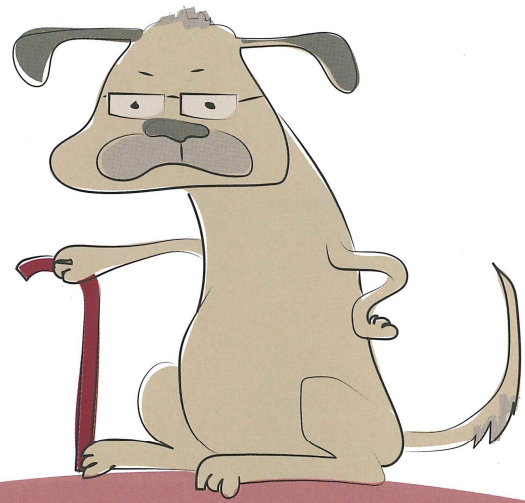
A guide to help see you through the senior years of your pet





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